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ABSTRACT

An analysis of student achievement and the ethnicity of students and instructional staff in the Syracuse (New York) City School District found a need to develop a multicultural curriculum that would ensure equal educational opportunity. A comparison of the scores of White, Black, and Hispanic elementary and middle school students on the IOWA Standardized Tests of reading and mathematics achievement showed the following: (1) the percentage of Black students needing remediation was more than double the percentage of White students; (2) there was a higher percentage of Hispanic students in the low range of performance than either Blacks or Whites; and (3) the percentage of White students in the high range of performance was generally four to five times larger than the percentage of Black or Hispanic students. An analysis of the ethnicity of teachers, administrators, and teaching assistants found that the racial/ethnic composition of the staff was not comparable to the racial/ethnic distribution of the students concentrated in urban schools. Recommendations for improvement are suggested in the following areas: (1) curriculum; (2) staff development; (3) staff recruitment; (4) parent and community involvement; and (5) elementary and middle school programming. Five graphs containing statistical data and a list of four references are appended. (FMW)

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Developing a Plan for Multicultural Education

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Developing a Plan for Multicultural Education

Introduction

In the Syracuse City School District, the Superintendent's Issues Analysis Team serves as a valuable in-district resource for collecting, analyzing and presenting the data necessary for sound decision-making. The team members are appointed for a one-year term by Dr. Henry P. Williams, Superintendent of Schools.

Selection criteria for team members include:

- willingness to serve in a voluntary capacity;
- interest in becoming an educational administrator;
- plans for obtaining administrative certification;
- ability to do highly professional research;
- ability to respect the legitimate needs of the superintendent of schools for confidentiality; and
- demonstrated potential for educational administration.

Team members conduct research on a variety of topics in response to district needs as expressed by Dr. Williams. One such concern identified by the Superintendent during the 1989-90 school year focused on disaggregated data and student achievement. Is there equity in academic performance among students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds? If so, what strategies can be utilized

to address the inequities? These crucial questions provided the impetus for the team's charge as expressed in the following mission statement:

To review research and resources in order to design a delivery system to infuse multicultural education in both the elementary and middle level educational programs.

The research process utilized by the team to implement this charge consisted of:

- a literature review;
- data base searches;
- contacts with numerous school districts including Atlanta, Georgia, and Portland, Oregon;
- discussions with various state education department officials; and
- interviews with leading experts, including educators at local colleges and universities.

Based upon this research, the team arrived at the following functional definition of multicultural education:

the development of an educational environment in which people of different races, sex, cultural heritage, national origin, religion, political, economic, and social backgrounds will develop an awareness, knowledge, and respect for cultural diversity to ensure equal educational opportunity.

Analysis of Disaggregated Data

The team subsequently examined different sources of data in terms of the various ethnic and cultural groups represented in the Syracuse City School District. The two areas in which data was collected were student achievement as measured by IOWA Standardized Tests and ethnicity of students and instructional staff.

Measures of student performance are essential for assessing the effectiveness of schools. Data on student achievement was analyzed to determine whether proportionate numbers of students from various ethnic and cultural groups within the Syracuse City School District are achieving in reading and mathematics.

The results of the IOWA standardized tests administered in May 1989 were used to compare levels of achievement. The data displayed compares the scores of White, Black and Hispanic students. The percentile scores are grouped as follows:

- * 1-23 percentile -- Students scoring in the low range of performance are eligible for remedial assistance.
- * 23-76 percentile -- Students in this range are considered within the average level of performance.
- * 77+ percentile -- Students scoring in this range are considered in the upper range of performance.

The disparity in math at both elementary and middle school levels can be seen in the following graphs and is repeated in the reading results of the IOWA's (*see Attachment A*).

In both cases, as illustrated by the graphs, the percentage of black students needing remediation is more than double the percentage of white students. The percentage of Hispanic students in the low range of performance is the highest of the three groups.

The disparity of performance at the upper range is even more dramatic (see *Attachment B*). The percentage of white students is nearly five times larger than the percentage of black students, and three times that of Hispanic students. As stated earlier, a similar pattern emerges from an analysis of reading scores with very little variation based on grade level (Middle vs. Elementary).

The second source of data represents teachers, administrators and teaching assistants. These staff members are mostly responsible for student outcomes. The interaction between students and instructional staff is, therefore, the core of the learning experience.

Classroom teaching continues to be a female dominated profession with males holding a significantly greater percentage of administrative leadership positions. The racial/ethnic composition of teachers and other professional staff is not comparable to the racial/ethnic distribution of the students concentrated in urban schools.

While not an answer in itself, proportionate racial/ethnic representation within the instructional staff is important to provide role modeling. Minority and disadvantaged children comprise an increasing percentage of the total public school enrollment. An analysis of the Syracuse City School District's student/instructional staff is represented in Attachment C.

1. The ethnic and cultural groups represented by the instructional staff were compared with the same data for the student population.

2. It is apparent from the charts that the racial/ethnic composition of the student population is not mirrored by the instructional staff.

Recommendations

The team's research findings pointed to six areas that needed to be reviewed, revised and refocused. These areas included Curriculum, Staff Development, Recruitment of Staff, Parent/Community Involvement, and Elementary.

Curriculum

Current curriculum guides must be reviewed. Inaccuracies need to be corrected and exclusions rectified. It is imperative that sufficient and varied materials be available to support the goals of the revised curriculum. Careful selection of textbooks in accordance with multicultural guidelines is necessary not only for their ability to support the skill areas of the curriculum, but also for accurate and visible inclusion of all groups of people. Support materials should be developed by the District in collaboration with knowledgeable community representatives of the ethnic and cultural groups.

Staff Development

Developing a multicultural education program requires a comprehensive staff development program. All teachers, administrators, and ancillary staff members share in the responsibilities of a growth-oriented system that allows for three stages of development: Awareness, Knowledge, and Skill.

Traditional teacher education programs have historically failed to give prospective teachers appropriate experiences in multicultural educational settings. Unconscious and stereotypical attitudes often influence the communications of accurate and objective information about ethnic groups in educational settings. The staff development program aims to fulfill this gap at the awareness stage.

Because cross-cultural communication barriers hamper multicultural education from developing and being integrated into a school system, staff members must be knowledgeable of the many cultures that exist in the community. Educators have a professional obligation to strengthen their understanding of cultures and subcultures with an emphasis on significant minority groups.

The third and final stage is skill. Since the skill stage is the most important, it requires a great deal of preparation in the awareness and knowledge stages. When mastering the skill stage, a staff member strives to become competent in a new area. Increasing knowledge and information about other cultures is basic to a staff member's ability to participate effectively in a multicultural program.

Recruitment of Staff

The recruitment of culturally diverse individuals should include two major components. The first component should be the recruitment of staff members from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The second component should

focus on retaining staff members within the school district. The team also highly recommends the development of a "grow your own" program aimed at leading students into the teaching profession with incentives for returning to teach in the district after their education is complete (*Sexton, 1986*).

Parent/Community Involvement

The staff has a responsibility to become aware and knowledgeable about the cultures of parents, to be understanding of their point of view, and to be able to explain school policies that relate to students. One of the concepts of multicultural education is mutual respect for all people. If there is respect, open communication and mutual understanding should result. Parents should feel that their opinions and cultures are valued. As parents are an important resource for an effective multicultural education program, so is the community at large. The Syracuse area is rich in multicultural community resources.

Speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, field trips to various cultural sites, and participation in cultural celebrations are integral parts of a multicultural education program.

Realizing multicultural education will be the catalyst to strengthen school/community bonds, the Superintendent's Issues Analysis Team highly recommends the development of a task force comprised of community leaders and citizens from diverse cultural backgrounds to brainstorm ideas to bring the diversity which exists in the community into the schools.

Elementary and Middle Level Applications

Multicultural education is designed to foster mutual respect, understanding and harmony between all segments of society. Since multicultural education involves a change of attitudes, it is especially relevant to young children. Attitudes are formed at a very early age, so it is important that the concept of multiculturalism be introduced at the initial stages of a child's education. Therefore, the program at the elementary school level should be developed with this goal in mind.

Elementary curriculum areas should reflect a multicultural perspective. This includes the regular classroom program as well as special areas. Field trips, assemblies, special programs and activities, should also be organized around multicultural themes to increase students' background knowledge about culturally different people.

Multicultural education has great relevance for middle level education. It is during the middle school years that the teacher's influence on the development of self-concept and identity, especially of culturally diverse adolescents, is significant. It is during this transitional time that educators must recognize and assume responsibility not only for students' intellectual and educational development, but also for their personal and social development. It is our belief that by providing appropriate middle level multicultural educational experiences students will develop the awareness, the knowledge and respect for people of culturally diverse backgrounds. Middle level instructional programs should

utilize an interdisciplinary approach to integrating multicultural education into the total school. A more intensive advisor/advisee and home-based guidance program should also be included. A focus should be placed on teaching strategies, cooperative learning groups, peer tutoring opportunities, and a mentor program to utilize community people to increase feelings for self-worth, self-confidence, and personal efficacy among students at the middle school level as a goal of multicultural education.

Conclusion

The Syracuse City School District recognizes the uniqueness and richness in the diversity of backgrounds of all children in the city schools. In implementing the New York State Regent's goal of having all students develop the ability to understand, respect, and accept cultural diversity, we feel that the time has come to make the educational environment a multicultural one. By infusing the curriculum with multicultural information, resources, strategies and activities, students can learn to accept and respect themselves and others as having dignity and worth. This in turn will ~~send~~ affirm the diversity that each child brings to the classroom. We, as educators, recognize the importance of making the classroom an exciting multicultural learning environment. When the curriculum reflects all groups, we send a message that we value children and the cultures they represent.

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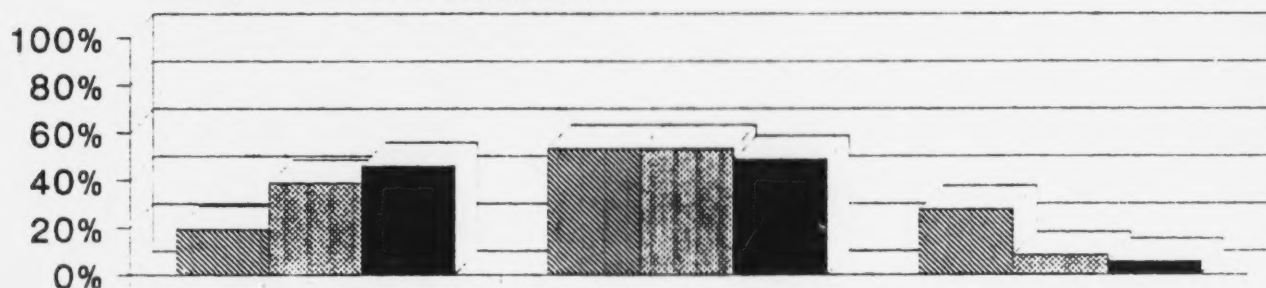
Sexton, Porter. "A Statistical Portrait of Multicultural Education / Multiethnic Student Population in Portland Public Schools." Eric Document 276797, 1986.

ATTACHMENT A

IOWA TEST SCORES - Math Achievement

Elementary School

Number of Students



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	19.2%	53.2%	27.6%
Black	38.6%	53.3%	8.1%
Hispanic	45.9%	48.6%	5.4%

Rank

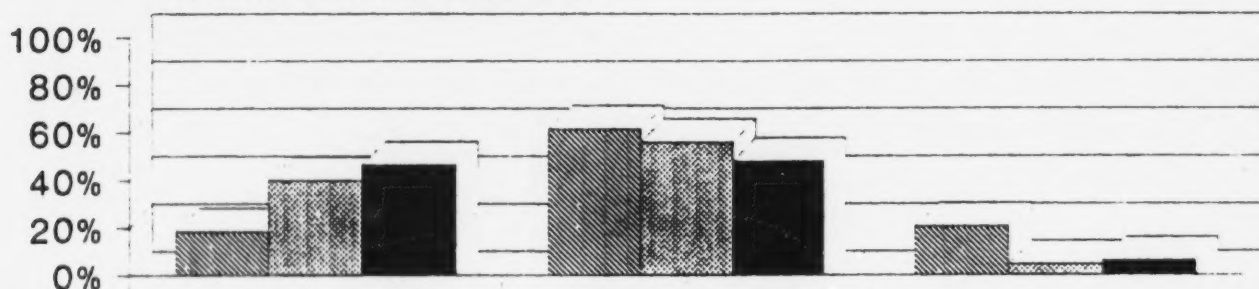


School Year 1989-90

IOWA TEST SCORES - Math Achievement

Middle School

Number of Students



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	18.2%	61.4%	20.4%
Black	39.8%	55.8%	4.4%
Hispanic	46.3%	47.8%	6%

Rank



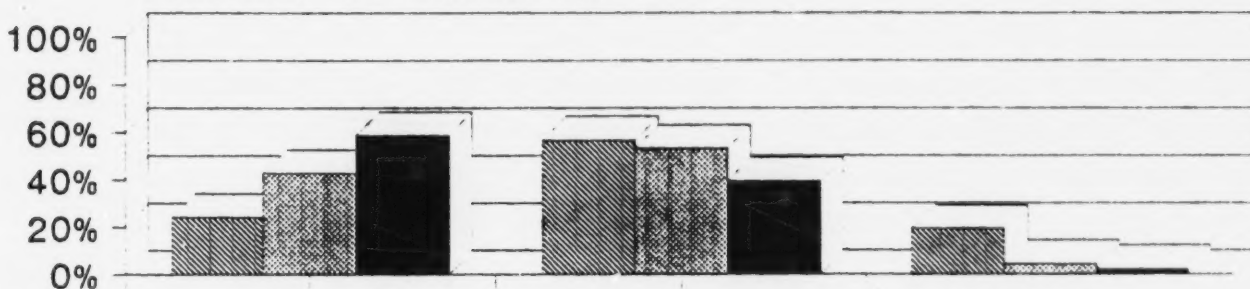
School Year 1989-90

ATTACHMENT B

IOWA TEST SCORES - Reading Achievement

Elementary School

Number of Students



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	24.2%	56.6%	19.2%
Black	42.7%	53%	4.3%
Hispanic	58.6%	39.4%	2.1%

Rank

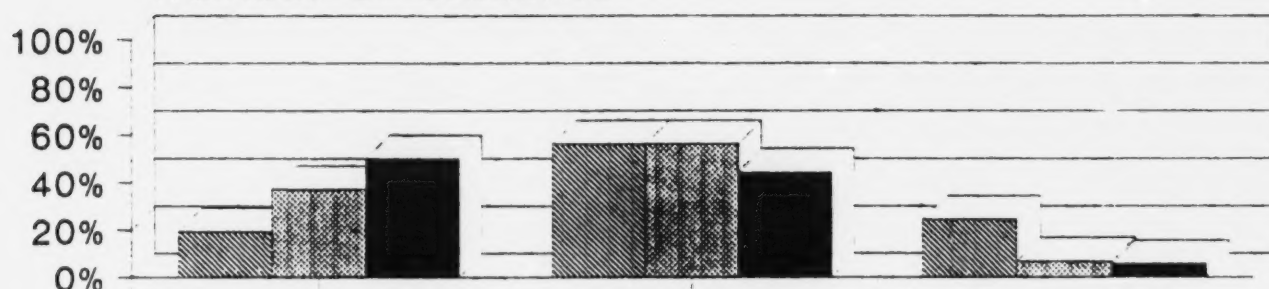


School Year 1989-90

IOWA TEST SCORES - Reading Achievement

Middle School

Number of Students



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	19.4%	56.1%	24.5%
Black	37.1%	56.1%	6.8%
Hispanic	50%	44.3%	5.7%

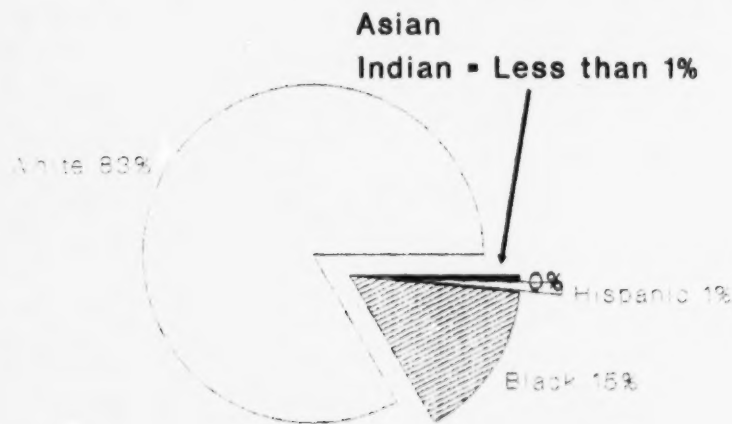
Rank



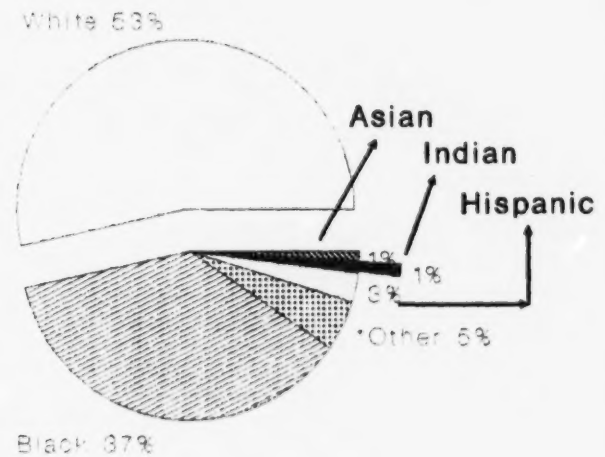
School Year 1989-90

ATTACHMENT C

TOTAL STAFF K-8 Disaggregated Data Analysis



Instructional Staff



Students

School Year 1989-90